

## Intro

Welcome to season eight of Bridge the Gap, a podcast dedicated to informing, educating, and influencing the future of housing and services for seniors. The BTG network is powered by sponsors, Aline, NIC MAP, Procare HR, Sage, Hamilton CapTel, ServiceMaster, The Bridge Group Construction, and Solinty and produced by Solinity Marketing. Bridge the Gap in three, two.

00:53 - 01:07

Lucas McCurdy

Welcome to Bridge the Gap podcast, the senior Living podcast with Josh and Lucas on a beautiful day here in Nashville at the NHI Symposium. We want to welcome a great guest to the show. Fred Zarrilli and you are with Senior Living Hospitality. Welcome to the show.

01:07 - 01:09

Frederick Zarrilli

Thank you. Pleasure to be here.

01:09 - 01:48

Lucas McCurdy

It's great to meet you, Fred. You know, Cameron, as we were kind of going down the list of people, Cameron and I were on the phone like, who should we get on? Who should we invite? And he said, "Look, do you know Fred Zarrilli?" I said, "No, I don't know, Fred." He said, "You need to know, Fred."

We've got to get Fred on the show. And one of the things that he told me is that, even last year, the keynote speaker really inspired you, even so much. So, hospitality is in your company name, so bring us up to date about your background and this new company that you're starting.

01:48 - 03:53

Frederick Zarrilli

Well, my career started on Wall Street up at 30,000ft, investing in different types of real estate and different kinds of industries. And one of them was senior housing. And I found that it just impacted me in a way that others didn't. It had more meaning, had more sense of purpose, and so little by little, I made my way from 30,000ft down to about 30ft, focusing on this industry.

And, about ten years ago became an owner operator in senior housing. And it has occupied all my time. And then some. I was affiliated with a national company for a period of time. And then about a year ago, we decided to spin off. There was a change of control transaction that was going to happen, and we didn't necessarily want to be part of that. That was just about the time of last year's NHI event, and this presentation was about.

The importance of hospitality in anything that any of us do. It applies to any industry, not just hotels and restaurants, and things like that. And, it just really resonated with me. So we named the company the new company, Senior Living Hospitality. And it's a marriage of two principles, to two things that represent, I think, the future of the industry, which is going to be a critical and key part of the success of any company, which is bringing that personal element of hospitality and all that means, the attentiveness, the attention to detail, the mindset. And, you know, the whole package, to

our residents, our customers. And as time goes on, I think the industry will demand that more and more, with, with, and next generation.

03:53 - 04:04

Lucas McCurdy

And since you've been at this a number of years, how have you seen this, emphasis on hospitality change, and why do you think it's so important now as opposed to in the past?

04:04 - 05:04

Frederick Zarrilli

Well, I think, customers are more demanding of it or have higher expectations. You know, ten years ago, a lot of our customers were children of the depression of World War II, and they were frugal. They were, you know, had had certain sensibilities. And I think that evolves. It's not good or bad.

It's just happening where people maybe have more money in their pocket, but they have expectations and they have a life experience where they want to continue. And, you know, living a lifestyle that they, they, they want to live in, that they've become accustomed to. It's not just about luxury, it's about that, attention to all aspects of what makes for a wholesome life.

05:04 - 05:21

Josh Crisp

So, Fred, curious. So you've launched this new platform. This has obviously been a really busy year for you since last year's symposium. So what's the growth strategy? What are you guys focusing on as far as sectors in the industry and geography, and what are you looking to do?

05:21 - 05:50

Frederick Zarrilli

Yeah, so we're a small company in Connecticut. We have two large-scale continuing care retirement communities, okay. About totaling about 500 residents about 500 employees. And job one is to get everything set up with systems with, you know, all aspects of our business exactly the way we want them, and that represents our vision of, you know, being the best that we can be.

And then we will selectively grow, probably in our region. One thing that I've come to believe is that our business is the best. Our customers are best served when we are local. And there's, you know, decreasing value added when with geographic diversity, you know, certainly a role for national companies. But much of what we bring to our residents that makes them make them feel that this is their home is based on local knowledge, local sensibilities, and local engagement with, with not just within our campus or our community, but with the, you know, greater community around us.

And so our goal will be to become very prevalent. Operator in Connecticut and perhaps surrounding regions, but not with, you know, national aspirations.

06:53 - 07:02

Josh Crisp

So are you seeing, in these existing communities, which, by the way, those that you say are very small, sound like a lot. That's a lot. You've got your hands wrapped around there.

07:02-07:04

Frederick Zarrilli

So large communities.

07:04-07:19

Josh Crisp

Yes. For sure. So, are you seeing this pivot in these generations? You even talked about the generations. What are you doing as far as just some practical things to pave the way for this next generation of seniors that we're serving?

07:19 - 09:11

Frederick Zarrilli

You know, I would say it's a combination of, you know, physical product is always important. And that means, you know, creating the physical spaces that people want to live in and that, you know, meet their expectations. It requires ongoing capital improvements sometimes. Or, you know, other, other efforts.

But the more important, I think, side is the culture that you're creating in the organization and the environment that you're creating for residents. You know, in many cases, our residents are 85, 90 years old. They live within the four walls of our community, by and large. Or some of them drive some of them, like to, to be outside the community regularly. But in many cases, you're creating their life environment and bringing,

You know, a full, wholesome, complexity and combination of opportunities for them to live every day to their fullest is what it's about, and it's what we try to bring to our residents even before they become residents. We hope that, you know, through storytelling, when a resident or prospect first comes to our community and spends two hours, they walk out feeling like they just saw their next home. Yeah. And that is, that's, you know, of course it needs to be a beautiful lobby like the one we're in, what needs to be something they feel.

And that's about the people they interact with and not just our employees. Sometimes the best way for a salesperson to really convey that feeling is to let our customers tell the story. Sure. And that happens frequently. You know, if you're doing a good job, that will happen.

09:11 - 09:27

Josh Crisp

So NHI, you're here at the symposium. Obviously, you've been here for at least two years. We've already heard it's had a huge impact on you. Just the keynotes alone. So when you approached this year and and here today and a little bit tomorrow, what are you hoping to take away?

09:27 - 09:29

Frederick Zarrilli

I think storytelling is a topic and engulfs everything that last year was and more. So it's the framework of hospitality. Telling a story isn't just, you know, words conveyed across a table. It's what a person feels from the moment they walk in the door. How are they greeted?

What did they see? What did they smell? What did they hear? An example. The pen you gave them, did it feel like it was a quality or something they wanted to throw away? Every little piece tells a story, and I think that's come into greater focus because of, you know, today, and certainly we'll give a lot more thought and discussion to it. But to think of everything you do has an impact on your customer or your prospective customer, and to think of that in the context of being a story

10:20 - 10:26

Josh Crisp

Absolutely. Lucas, a great time here at the Nye event. A lot going on.

10:26 - 10:48

Lucas McCurdy

Yes. You know, I couldn't help but think it kind of, you know, it begs the question, as we round out our conversation, saying hospitality is one thing. Being hospitable is another thing. And I can tell just by your demeanor in our conversation, you're a very hospitable person. How do you convey and build a culture? You have a lot of employees.

These are, you know, CCRCs are very big communities, very different from your, you know, kind of 80-bed AL. How do you create that consistency in hospitality at a big, large CCRC from the bus driver to the front desk person, to the housekeeper? How do you create that culture and know that that every day they're going to deliver on that?

11:11 - 12:42

Frederick Zarrilli

That's the key word, culture. It's by building a culture and reinforcing that culture. You know, by it starts with, to a large extent with our associates, our employees. You know, we look for people that, that understand that and that want to be a part of something like that. They care about that. And it speaks to why they do what they do.

You know, most of us can choose a different industry. We can choose to do something different with our lives. We're choosing this one. And it's also to empower them by empowering them to listen and to react and not to feel like, I can't do that, or it's not my job. If you hear a resident saying, boy, it's been a long time since I've had a hot fudge sundae, well, you're empowered to go make that happen. It's the little things that add up

And that's a culture that is not always about, you know, in fact, it's not about what are my earnings this month or this quarter or it's about building relationships that are transforming, that make people want to make a decision to be part of our community because of what they see, and more importantly, because of what they feel. And it's a culture you just work on every day.

12:42 - 13:10

Lucas McCurdy

And that's a great way to end the show, build a culture around a team that feels empowered to be hospitable. Great way to put it, Fred. Thank you so much for your time today. Thanks for telling your story. And I know that our listeners, Josh, are going to want to connect and hear more stories. And if you want to, you can go to [btgvoice.com](http://btgvoice.com). Listen to this story and so much more. Hit us up on

LinkedIn. We'd love to hear you and your comments and your stories. Thanks for listening to another great episode of Bridge the Gap.

#### Outro

Thanks for listening to Bridge the Gap podcast with Josh and Lucas. Connect with the BTG network team and use your voice to influence the industry by connecting with us at [btgvoice.com](http://btgvoice.com).